

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2597

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 28, 2008

Title: An act relating to creating a kindergarten readiness assessment.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of early learning and the office of the superintendent of public instruction to develop a kindergarten entry assessment.

Sponsors: House Committee on App Subcom Ed (originally sponsored by Representatives Sullivan, Pedersen, Hasegawa, Ormsby, Haigh, Chase, Green and Simpson).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/19/08, 87-8.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/28/08 [DPA-WM, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Hobbs, Kauffman, McDermott, Oemig and Rasmussen.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Holmquist.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Currently in Washington, school districts may establish uniform entry qualifications, including but not limited to birth date requirements, for admission to kindergarten programs. These requirements may provide for exceptions based upon the ability or need of an individual student. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) allows school districts to adopt regulations that provide for individual exceptions to the uniform entry qualifications. However, the districts must comply with any rule adopted by the SPI that authorizes a preadmission screening process as a prerequisite to granting exceptions to the uniform entry qualifications for kindergarten.

In 2006 the Washington Legislature created the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and directed the Director of DEL to participate in the creation and governance of a private-public partnership focused on supporting the government's investments in early learning and promoting school readiness and success. This private-public partnership is Thrive by Five Washington.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): DEL and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with Thrive by Five Washington and specified stakeholders, must make recommendations for the implementation of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment.

In developing the assessment, the recommendations must examine research on the critical knowledge and skills for successful entry and progress in kindergarten; examine examples of assessments used in Washington and other states; identify a preferred kindergarten entry assessment; specify a plan for piloting and then requiring the assessment; describe a method for conducting the assessments, including training or professional development for those administering the assessment; describe a process for reporting results of the assessment to parents, OSPI, and DEL; and propose a plan for communicating with early learning providers and parents about the knowledge and skills covered by the assessment.

In collaboration with others, DEL and OSPI must analyze how the assessment can be used to improve instruction for students entering kindergarten; how the results can be used to improve the early learning and K-12 systems; and the costs of the assessment. The assessment selected must be sensitive to cultural and socioeconomic differences and it must not be used to preclude eligible children from kindergarten.

DEL and OSPI must submit a report with recommendations for implementing the kindergarten entry assessment to the Governor and the Legislature by October 15, 2009. Prior to statewide implementation of the kindergarten entry assessment, DEL must present the assessment to the Legislature for formal approval in the budget, by statute, by concurrent resolution.

A null and void clause is included.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): Requires DEL to present the kindergarten entry assessment to the Legislature for formal approval prior to statewide implementation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Second Substitute Bill: PRO: There are a wide variety of kindergarten assessments across the state. It is important to provide consultation with stakeholders. This is a thoughtful process. The implementation should not be rushed into; the potential impacts could be great.

CON: The healthy development of any young child should be free from academic stress. The system is not ready for a kindergarten assessment. We are moving too fast. The benchmarks need to be redesigned first. A state standard must be culturally appropriate. The removal of "implementation" would improve the bill.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor; Agda Burchard, Washington Association of Education of Young Children; Robert Butts, OSPI.

CON: Ben Kodama, Equitable Opportunity Caucus; Miguel Perez Gibson, Colville Tribes;
Suzi Wright, Tulalip Tribes.